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Archaeological
Institute
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REPORT OF THE FELLOW IN AMERICAN
ARCHAEOLOGY

*To the Standing Committee on American Archaeology of the
Archaeological Institute of America:*

GENTLEMEN, — I have the honor to present to you my preliminary report, covering the work of the first half of the second year under the American Fellowship of the Institute.

I left Boston on December 9, 1902, and returned on May 5 of this year. My season of field work was divided between two regions, Yucatan and Chiapas, Mexico.

The first two months were spent in the former place. There I was fortunate in obtaining the same interpreter with whom I worked the previous year, and thus was able to take up without delay the linguistic material where I had left it. Since leaving Yucatan last year, I have been at work on this material, and during my stay there this year I was able to supply, rectify, and often settle, points which had come up in the work on the language away from the field. I endeavored especially to perfect myself in the Maya as spoken by the natives; and, as it proved later, to this ability to speak with the Indians in their own tongue was mainly due the measure of success I obtained with the Lacandonos of Chiapas, who speak practically the same dialect.

I entered Yucatan this year with my hopes and plans laid to make the journey by land to Tuloom on the eastern coast. I went as far east as Valladolid before I finally allowed myself to give up all hope of reaching the eastern shore by an overland trip. I was continually assured of the danger and impracticability of reaching Tuloom otherwise than by sea. As it was

the territory between Valladolid and the coast which I desired to explore, quite as much as Tuloom itself, I gave up the trip until at some later time the sublevado Indians shall be finally and completely subdued by the Mexican troops.

After rounding out the linguistic material and gaining a more complete and fuller knowledge of the spoken language, I left Yucatan on February 10 for Frontera at the mouth of the River Usumacinta in the state of Tabasco. There I took a river boat to Santa Margarita, a hacienda five leagues above the town of Tenosique, a trip of three days and two nights. Owing to the kindness of the "Compañía Romano" and the "Compañía Mexicana Oriental y Sud," I was furnished with horses and a guide to continue my journey inland to "Laguna Pethá" in the state of Chiapas.

Situated two leagues from the lake, I found a small settlement of three families of the Lacandone Indians, generally called "Caribes" by the Mexicans of the country. Here, in one of the empty huts, I took up my residence, after overcoming their fear that I would bring them sickness of various kinds. This people, although with customs entirely different and distinct from the Mayas of Yucatan, still speak a dialect of the Maya which is very closely allied to that spoken on the peninsula. For this reason, I could easily make myself understood by them, and learned very soon to make the simple changes, especially in the final vowels, that the dialect required. As these Indians speak little or no Spanish, a knowledge of their language is of the first importance.

Mr. Maler, in his first Memoir published by the Peabody Museum, speaks of this tribe of Indians as burning copal before their gods and carrying on certain secret rites. It was with a desire to find out something about these ceremonies which he mentions that I entered this territory.

In the first weeks of my stay among them, any approach to the sacred inclosure where the idols or "santos" of the family are kept was absolutely denied me, and I spent my time in working with one of the natives on the language. Gradually,

I found with a little coaxing I could induce the Indian in a roundabout manner to tell me something of his gods, the rites in connection with which I was so anxious to witness. Before I was allowed to see anything, I began to learn certain of the rituals which are used in the ceremonies. Little by little, I gained the confidence of the natives, and day by day I was allowed more privileges until I was able to witness several of the ceremonies. Finally I was permitted to take part in them myself, and take pictures of the priest engaged in the rites. Just before I left, they voluntarily made me idols of two of their gods, and went so far as to instruct me in the observances which I am supposed, even now, to carry out before the idols.

Many of the sacrifices which are offered to the "santos" or idols in behalf of the gods are the same as those which Landa mentions in his *Relacion de Las Cosas de Yucatan*. Furthermore, many other points which he gives show that these rites now carried on by the Lacandones are clearly survivals of the ancient culture.

The people live in families separated at some distance from each other. Remains of animal totems are found among these families, but further inquiries are needed before I can report definitely upon this matter. The natives have very little to do with the Mexicans, as their environment furnishes them with all their needs, with the single exception of salt. Only those nearest the border of the territory occupied by the Mexicans use firearms; all the others employ the bow and arrow, as described by Landa, to kill their game.

Their gods, of whom the idols or "incense burners" are but representations, are supposed to live in cliffs in different parts of the country. Pilgrimages are constantly being made to the homes of the gods, where copal is burned and sacrifices of food and drink are offered. It was my privilege to take part in one of these functions with the people with whom I lived, and I hope later to visit the shrines of all the gods.

I attended six of their ceremonies, two of which were the same, and collected the chants which are sung throughout the

observances of these rites. The general subject of these prayers seems to be the plea for protection from the dangers of the country, such as the bite of the snake and the lion, and the cure of diseases.

As I am now engaged in writing a detailed report of the work among the Lacandones, and especially their rites and ceremonies, I will not enter further into a description of this people.

On my way northward to the ocean, I visited the town of Palenque and the noted ruins near the village. Here I found another dialect of the Maya, which differs very decidedly both from that spoken in Yucatan and the closely allied dialect of the Lacandones around Lake Pethá.

My object next year is to visit as many of the settlements of the Lacandones as possible, and to make pilgrimages with them to the homes of their gods, thus gaining a more complete knowledge of their ceremonies and customs, and endeavoring if possible to find, far away in the interior of their territory, some larger and more important settlement of these people, where even now there may be an aged priest who knows something of the ancient calendar system and the ceremonies which centre around it.

ALFRED MARSTON TOZZER.

CAMBRIDGE,
May 24, 1903.

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